(b) if so, whether the provisions that were framed to give representation to the best and proven talents of all Indian languages are being distorted and vested interests are alleged to be making changes with ulterior motives; and

(c) if so, whether Government would institute an enquiry in their administrative, financial and professional working?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (c) Concerns had been expressed by some eminent writers and General Council members largely in the context of amendments made by the General Council of the Sahitya Akademi, in its meeting held on 7.10.2007, to certain provisions of the Akademi's Constitution.

Objections regarding these amendments have been addressed by the General Council in its subsequent meeting held on 26.12.2007. The reconstitution of General Council of Sahitya Akademi has since been completed according to the provisions contained in the Constitution of the Sahitya Akademi. A new President of the Akademi has also been elected by the newly-constituted General Council in its meeting held on 20.02.2008.

Increase in airfare in gulf sector

*8. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received complaints alleging that Air India is hiking the airfare in the Gulf route during the peak seasons;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government proposes to stop this unjustified exploitation;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Suggestions have been received from some Hon'ble MPs for reducing the fares to/from Gulf region to stations in Kerala/Karnataka.

(c) to (e) Airlines generally maintain very competitive fares on gulf sector. While the fares are maintained at normal level during vacation/festival time, the fares the reduced during the non-peak periods when the demand is low. Air India has also launched a low cost subsidiary called Air India Express which operates on the Gulf route and offers 20-25% lower airfares than those charged by the legacy carriers with the discount in fare going up to even 50% during lean season.

Decline in irrigation by canals

t*9. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been continuous decline in irrigation by canals during the last ten years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of efforts being made to enhance irrigation sector?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) to (c) No, Sir. There has been continuous increase in the irrigation potential through canal and water distribution system created under major & medium irrigation projects and minor irrigation schemes utilizing surface water.

The irrigation potential through major and medium projects and minor irrigation schemes utilizing surface water has increased from about 45.46 million hectares (Mha) at end of Eighth Plan (March) 1997) to about 56.66 Mha at the end of Tenth Plan (March 2007). Similarly, the irrigation potential utilized from these schemes has increased from about 39.51 Mha at the end of Eighth Plan to about 46.42 Mha at the end of Tenth Plan.

The Government of India has given due emphasis on irrigation development and continuous efforts are made to further increase the creation of irrigation potential. Creation of irrigation potential of 9 Mha through major and medium irrigation projects and 7 Mha through minor irrigation schemes is envisaged during Eleventh Plan.

Volatility in stock markets

*10. SHRI DARA SINGH:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the stock markets in the country witnessed the biggest single day drop and rise this year resulting in single day drop of 1408.35 points and investors losing wealth of Rs. 6,63,975 crore in January, 2008;

(b) if so, what are the reasons behind the volatility in stock markets;

(c) whether any review has so far been conducted to analyse the reasons for the said steep fall and rise of markets;

(d) if so, the details thereof along with steps taken, if any, to contain the extreme swings; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Sensex and Nifty witnessed a fall of 1408.35 points and 496.5 points respectively on January 21,2008. They also witnessed a rise of 1139.92 points and 349.90 points respectively on January 25,2008. These are the largest single day movements by way of value of indices. They are, however, much lower compared to large movements observed earlier in percentage terms. The loss or gain arising from market movement is notional.

(b) to (e) Volatility is inherent in any market. It is an outcome of perceptions of the investors—domestic and overseas, retail and institutional—about the economy, the sector and the company. This perception is influenced by many factors including the macro-economic environment, the growth potential of the economy, policy credibility of the government, corporate performance, domestic and international events and market sentiments.

The Government does not try to manage or control volatility. The Government's endeavour is to build systems and practices and deepen and broaden markets which can withstand volatility. The Government has put in place systems and practices to promote a safe, transparent and efficient market and to protect market integrity. The systems instituted include